suitable technologies for up-gradation and maintenance of track, rolling stock, signalling and interlocking systems, safety drives and inspections at regular intervals to monitor and educate staff for observance of safe practices. As a result, there has been a declining trend in the number of consequential train accidents. In the current year during April to October, 2009, consequential train accidents decreased from 105 to 82 in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) The number of Manned and Unmanned Level Crossings on Indian Railways as on 01.04.2009 is 17244 and 16976, respectively. As the unmanned level crossings are being progressively manned on continuous basis, unmanned level crossing accidents have decreased from 72 in 2006-07 to 65 in 2007-08 and further to 62 in 2008-09.

Duranto trains

1048. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways have started non-stop air conditioned trains connecting a few cities;

(b) if so, the details of such trains known as "Duranto trains" started so far;

(c) whether all the Duranto trains have been made operational;

(d) whether Railways contemplate to introduce more such services between important cities especially in Jharkhand; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Railways have started both AC and non AC non-stop Duronto trains connecting important cities.

The following Duronto trains have been introduced so far:—

1. Sealdah-New Delhi (AC)
2. Chennai-Nizamuddin
3. Nizamuddin-Pune (AC)
4. Howrah-Mumbai CST(AC)
5. Nagpur-Mumbai CST

(c) Of the 14 pairs of Duronto trains announced, 5 pairs have been introduced, the remaining 9 pairs of trains will be introduced during the year 2009-10.

(d) At present there is no such proposal.

(e) Does not arise.

Shortage of porters

1049. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to diversion of licensed porters as gangmen by Railways, there is continuing shortage of porters in the country, particularly at big stations, causing extreme hardship to the passengers, particularly women and the elderly;

(b) whether it is also a fact that senior railway officials are not interested to recruit suitable number of porters for vested interest and existing porters are charging exorbitantly from the helpless passengers; and

(c) whether Government would solve the problem in a time-frame for the welfare of the travelling persons; if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) Consequent to absorption of licensed porters as Trackmen, some vacancies had arisen in the category of licensed porters. Railways have already initiated the process of assessing the vacancies and engaging additional licensed porters, wherever required, at the railway stations. The availability of licensed porters is also ensured through redeployment within the division. To overcome the problem of exploitation by the licensed porters, regular checks are conducted at stations. The badges of the licensed porters involved in such activities are impounded/ suspended.

Construction of budget hotels

1050. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is not been to construct "budget hotels" for which allotment letters had already been issued and is now planning with another project "World Class Railway Stations";

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Railway Land Development Authority (RLDA) are both pressing for claim for functioning as implementing agency for construction of "much hyped-budget hotel scheme"; and

(d) if so, her Ministry's stand indicating selected sites of these hotels, till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Development of budget hotels is an integral part of the World Class Stations proposed to be taken up at 39 railway stations over the Indian Railways. In addition, 66 railway stations across the country have been identified for development of Multi-functional Complexes, which may also have budget hotels, wherever warranted, by passenger requirements. List of the railway stations so identified is given in the enclosed Statement.